

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

1. **NUMBER** CO-110-2004-001-EA
2. **CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER:** COC67198
3. **PROJECT NAME:** Communication Site, Buried Powerline, Access Road on Herod Peak
4. **LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado  
T. 5 N., R. 98 W.,  
Sec. 23, lot 4, E2SW.
5. **APPLICANT:** Union Telephone Company
6. **NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:** This facility is required to provide cellular telephone services to the areas surrounding the Elk Springs, Colorado area and along Colorado State highway 40 in Moffat County. This telecommunication site will promote public safety, productivity, and convenience through communications in the area.
7. **DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION:**

**a. Proposed Action:** The facility to be constructed consists of a pre-fabricated, fiberglass-covered 8' x 16' shelter and an 8' x 12' shelter. The shelters will be painted a light brown/tan color to blend with the surrounding area. An 80' high self-supporting steel lattice tower will be constructed to mount antennas and microwave dishes. The tower will be made of galvanized steel that weathers to a dull gray color. To provide electrical power, a buried power line will be installed from the power distribution box located in the SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, of Section 22, T. 5 N., R. 98 W. to the site. The facility will be constructed to allow space for possible expansion, both within the equipment buildings and on the tower. Space will be available to other leasers, based upon BLM and FCC approval.

The tower, appropriate antennas and the shelter, will be mounted and bolted to its foundation. The design of the foundations will be in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations for the soil types found locally. The building will be designed for 100 pounds per square foot snow load.

Existing access roads will be utilized; no additional roadway grading will be required. All hauling of materials, including concrete, will be done utilizing existing roads. No additional road building or clearing is necessary.

The power line will be plowed to a depth of approximately 36 inches. The area that was plowed will be rolled with heavy equipment, and the scar from this construction will not be visible once the site is constructed.

All-weather roads are not required to gain access to the facility. In the event that normal 4-wheel drive trucks cannot access the facility, Union will utilize either snow cats or snowmobiles to transport personnel to perform maintenance operations. Use of helicopters for access may be required from time to time.

Upon completion of construction, Union will re-grade the surfaces with local material to the extent possible to match the original ground contours. The amount of grading will be minimal, however some is expected due largely to the excavation for tower foundation. It is anticipated that the cell site will be required on an indefinite basis. In the event the location is no longer needed, the facility will be dismantled, the concrete broken up and removed from the site. The ground in the area will then be graded, seeded and restored to its pre-existing state.

The area encumbered will be 50 feet by 50 feet for 0.06 acres more or less. The access road will be 20 feet wide, 5,000 feet long, encompassing 2.30 acres. The power line right-of-way will be 30 feet wide and 3,000 feet long, encompassing 2.07 acres. The authorizing authority is Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The term of the right-of-way will be for 30 years.

**b. No Action Alternative:** No communications site would be constructed.

## **8. PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:**

**a. Name of Plan:** White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

**b. Date Approved:** July 1, 1997

**c. Page/Decision:** Pages 2-49 thru 2-52 “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

**d.** The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3) The action conforms to the decisions/pages of the plan listed above.

**9. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER NEPA DOCUMENTS:** This environmental assessment is tiered to, and incorporates by reference the White River Resource Area Resource Management Plan (PRMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) approved May 29, 1996.

## **10. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/MITIGATION MEASURES:**

### **CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

An X in the “Not Affected” column in the table below indicates that the critical element has been analyzed and will not be affected by the proposed action or the no action alternative. Affected elements are addressed in the paragraphs following the table.

Not Affected	Critical Element	Specialist Signature	Date
	Air Quality		
	Cultural Resources		
X	Floodplains, Wetlands, Riparian Zones, and Alluvial Valleys	Ed Hollowed	10/28/03
X	Native American Concerns	Scott Pavey	11/3/03
X	Prime and Unique Farmlands	Scott Pavey	11/3/03
X	Threatened and Endangered Animals	Ed Hollowed	10/28/03
X	Threatened and Endangered Plants	T. Meagley	10-15-03
X	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	M. O'Mara	11-3-03
	Water quality, Surface or Ground		
X	Wilderness Area, Wild and Scenic Rivers	Chris Ham	10-27-03
X	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	T. Meagley	10-15-03
X	Environmental Justice	Scott Pavey	11/3/03
X	Invasive, Non-Native Species/Reclamation	R. Fowler	10-22-03
	Noxious Weeds		

## AIR QUALITY:

**Affected Environment:** There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action

**Impact of Proposed Action:** The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. However, airborne particulate matter should not exceed Colorado air quality standards on an hourly or daily basis. Following successful seeding of the sites, airborne particulate matter should return to near pre-construction levels

**Impact of No Action Alternative:** None

**Mitigative Measures:** None

**Signature of specialist:** CHollowed 10/20/03

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES:**

***Affected Environment:*** The proposed tower location, access road and power line have been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level ( Scott, 2003, 2004, Compliance Dated 10.20/2003, 4/27/2004) with three isolated finds located in the area inventoried.

***Impact of Proposed Action:*** The proposed action will not affect any cultural resources that are NRHP eligible. If any of the Isolated Finds are impacted by the project there will be a small loss of the regional data base.

***Impact of No Action Alternative:*** There will be no impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

***Mitigative Measures:*** 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

***Signature of specialist:*** Michael Selle 4/27/2004

**WATER QUALITY, SURFACE OR GROUND:** (This includes all information related to Public Land Health Standard 5.)

***Affected Environment:*** A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was one to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. The proposed Powerline, road and communication site are in the Buffalo Gulch drainage, tributary to Twelvemile Creek and the Yampa River. The State has classified this segment as a "Use Protected" reach. Its designated beneficial uses are: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The antidegradation review requirements in the Antidegradation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply. For this reach, minimum standards for three parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0 and Fecal Coliform = 2000/100ml and 630/100 ml E. coli. In addition standards for inorganic and metals have also been listed and can be found in the table of stream classifications and water quality standards.

***Impact of Proposed Action:*** Annual runoff from these watersheds is dynamic and dependent on some aspects we control, such as the amount of vegetation retained for watershed protection and vegetation density. Depleting the vegetation cover needed to protect watersheds from raindrop impact and runoff could cause short-term erosion problems and increased sedimentation to the Yampa River watershed until successful Best Management Practices (BMPs) have been implemented and prove to be successful. The magnitude of these impacts is dependent on the amount of surface disturbance and climatic conditions during the time the soils are exposed to the elements.

***Impact of No Action Alternative:*** Impacts are not anticipated from not permitting the proposed action.

***Mitigative Measures:*** None

***Signature of specialist:*** CHollowed 11/03/03

**NOXIOUS WEEDS:** (This includes vegetation information related to Public Land Health Standard 3.)

***Affected Environment:*** No site surveys for noxious weeds have been conducted on this site. The proposed project is within a weed free zone as established by the WRRRA RMP of 1997. Within the area spotted and diffuse knapweeds have been found and are considered a serious threat to the area.

***Impact of Proposed Action:*** There is the opportunity for construction and support vehicles to transport onto the site any number of noxious weed species. The requirement for vehicles to be cleaned prior to use on the public lands would minimize introduction of weeds. If during maintenance of this site the operator makes a diligent effort to mechanically control any weeds that occur, there would not be any expected problems. In the event that weeds were to establish and move offsite the operator would be required to control the infestation. With proper control, weeds would not continue to be a problem as a function of this action.

**Impact of No Action Alternative:** There would be no impacts.

**Mitigation Measures:** 176. All contractors and land-use operators moving surface disturbing equipment into the weed free zones must clean their equipment prior to use on BLM lands. These requirements may be waived by the area manager.

179. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA-certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

**Signature of specialist:** Robert J. Fowler      10-22-03

## NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

An X in the “Not Affected” column in the table below indicates that the non-critical element has been analyzed and will not be affected by the proposed action or the no action alternative. Affected elements are addressed in the paragraphs following the table.

Not Affected	Non-Critical Element	Specialist Signature	Date
X	Access and Transportation	Scott Pavey	10/22/03
X	Forest Management	R. Fowler	10-22-03
X	Geology and Minerals	Paul Daggett	10/20/2003
X	Hydrology and Water Rights	CHollowed	10/20/03
X	Land Status/Realty Authorizations	Penny Brown	10/10/03
X	Fire Management	Ken Holsinger	10/10/03
	Paleontology		
	Rangeland Management		
X	Recreation	Chris Ham	10/27/03
	Soils		
	Visual Resources		
X	Wildlife Aquatic	Ed Hollowed	10/28/03
	Wildlife Terrestrial		
X	Wild Horses	R. Fowler	10-22-03

## PALEONTOLOGY:

***Affected Environment:*** The proposed action is located in an area mapped as the Morgan Formation which is a fossiliferous, cherty limestone which the BLM has classified as a Category II formation which has an undetermined potential for producing scientifically important fossils.

***Impact of Proposed Action:*** The proposed action does not appear to have the potential to impact scientifically important fossils

***Impact of No Action Alternative:*** There would not be any impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

***Mitigative Measures:*** If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

***Signature of specialist:*** Michael Selle 11/19/2003

## RANGELAND MANAGEMENT:

***Affected Environment:*** The proposed action is located within Herod Peak pasture of the Elk Springs Allotment (06326), which is allocated for sheep use from April 11<sup>th</sup> through June 10<sup>th</sup>. Rangelands associated with the proposed action are dominated by grass species, due to a wildfire which burned off the sagebrush, pinion, and juniper components of the vegetation community. The proposed action is located within a Deep/Mountain Loam ecological site. Dominate plant species associated with this site are western wheatgrass, needle-and-thread-grass, squirrel tail, big sagebrush, pinion, and juniper trees.

***Impact of Proposed Action:*** The individual proposed action would have minimal impacts on the authorized grazing use because the amount of surface disturbance is nominal in regards to the scale of the allotments. The short-term soil and vegetation disturbances would be offset in the long-term by reclaiming disturbed areas with a seed mix that is suited for this ecological site. Authorized livestock will adapt to the facilities once constructed, however a minimal and short-term displacement will occur during construction if an overlap occurs during the grazing period.

The slopes off of Herod Peak may serve as a bedground for sheep, therefore concentrating livestock use around the proposed action locality. The concentrated use by sheep of this hill may interfere with the proposed action if any delicate instruments are exposed. However, all instruments/equipment should be contained within the proposed structure.

***Impact of No Action Alternative:*** None.

**Mitigation Measures:** Any livestock control facilities (e.g. fences) and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

**Signature of specialist:** Jed Carling (10/28/03)

## SOILS:

**Affected Environment:** The soils have been mapped in an unpublished Order III soil survey of Moffat County. The survey is available for review in the White River Field Office. Below is a table identifying the soils encounter by the proposed action and soil properties of each soil type.

Proposed Action	Soil Number	Soil Name	% Slope	Range site	Top Soil (inches)	RunOff	Erosion Potential	Seed Mix #
Powerline	7E	Evanot loam	12 - 25	Deep Loam	8	Rapid	High	3
Powerline	26D	Berlake sandy loam	3 - 12	Sandy Foothills	10	Medium	Moderate	5
Powerline	64D	Forelle-Evanot complex	1 - 12	Rolling Loam - Deep Loam	5-8	Medium	Moderate	3
Communication site	147	Ninot-Crago-Garlips complex	15 - 45	Dry Mountain Loam Dry Exposure - Mountain Loam	3-8	Medium	Moderate	8

Revegetation limitations for these soil types include an arid climate and droughty soil condition. None of the proposed action has been mapped as areas being fragile on slopes greater than 35 %. No special designations have been assigned to their locations.

**Impact of Proposed Action:** There would be an increase in erosion potential and sedimentation from overland flows, due to removal of the protective vegetation, soil compaction, and exposure of underlying soil layers. These impacts would be short term during the construction phase and for a period after construction providing successful reclamation occurs.

**Impact of No Action Alternative:** Impacts from not permitting the proposed action are not anticipated.

**Mitigative Measures:** None

**Signature of specialist:** CHollowed 11/03/03

## VISUAL RESOURCES:

**Affected Environment:** This communication site is in an area classified as VRM Class 3. VRM Class 3 management allows for development as long as the development does not dominate the new landscape.



***Impact of Proposed Action:*** The proposal includes measures to reduce the visual impacts and therefore comply with the guidelines for VRM Class 3.

***Impact of No Action Alternative:*** No impacts.

***Mitigative Measures:*** None required.

***Signature of specialist:*** Max McCoy 11-03-03

## **WILDLIFE TERRESTRIAL:**

***Affected Environment:*** The project area is classified as mule deer summer range (occupied from April-December) and elk severe winter range/winter concentration area. The area formerly supported sage grouse nesting, summer, and winter use functions. However, from both the deer and sage grouse perspectives, the functional properties of the project area were drastically altered in 1988 when a 14,000 acre wildfire changed the landscape from one dominated by sagebrush/bitterbrush steppe with scattered stands of young Utah juniper, to grassland with scattered remnant stands of sagebrush (i.e., sagebrush/bitterbrush community comprises less than 1% of the surrounding landscape). Relatively long term losses of shrub land cover within interior portions of the burn have reduced seasonal deer and sage grouse use to nominal levels. A few thousand elk continue to use these grasslands from December through May.

The project vicinity involves a low, isolated east-west oriented ridgeline and is not a landform that would be conducive to concentrated use during bird migration.

***Impact of Proposed Action:*** Access, construction, and occupation of this facility would have no substantive consequence on current or future wildlife uses of this area. Short term construction activity and brief and sporadic instances of maintenance work, using existing road networks within 1 mile of U.S. Highway 40, would be of no consequence to wintering elk. Installation of a buried powerline would avoid any potential problems associated with raptor electrocution or providing elevated perches from which raptors may enjoy increased proficiency at hunting sage grouse.

Over the bulk of its length, the proposed powerline route is situated in recently burned grassland acreage and parallels an existing powerline corridor—a situation which poses no long term consequence to any forage or cover resources. However, over its initial 2500' from the tower location, the route bisects a remnant sagebrush/bitterbrush stand. The first 1750 feet or so of this route closely parallels (centerline about 15' off the road edge) the existing access road, with the last 750' or so deviating cross-country. There is a strong likelihood that any construction-related, cross-country vehicle use between the 2-track and the powerline corridor to the north would receive subsequent use by recreating publics. In order to stabilize road densities and road-related impacts on big game severe winter ranges (a White River ROD/RMP approved land use decision) and to minimize further reduction or deterioration of remnant shrub land resources, it is recommended that: 1) the power line be laid immediately adjacent to the existing road edge and, if feasible, brush not be cleared from

the right-of-way, between the tower facility and the two-track intersection at UTM N4471634 E722793 (see attached map), 2) approximately 750' of powerline right-of-way below the 2-track intersection, as identified in the attached map, be shifted northeast into burned acreage to avoid further involvement of remnant sagebrush/bitterbrush shrub land and to make some effort at reducing the appearance of a roadbed . This shift, depending on the need for surface preparation, would involve distances of 10-75 feet, and 3) that no blading occur and no wheeled vehicles be allowed to travel cross-country between the two-track access road and existing powerline corridor (i.e., one pass with dozer only).

***Impact of No Action Alternative:*** Assuming that this facility would be located at another nearby location, the no-action alternative would have virtually identical potential for impacting wintering elk (i.e., no substantive influence from very short term, infrequent, and sporadic activity). Failure to authorize this action would eliminate the need to supply electrical power at this site, thus avoiding the likelihood of having an additional 1200' of off-road trail becoming developed on BLM-administered lands.

***Mitigative Measures:*** In order to stabilize road densities and road-related impacts on big game severe winter ranges (a White River ROD/RMP approved land use decision) and to minimize further reduction or deterioration of remnant shrub land resources, it is recommended that: 1) the power line be laid immediately adjacent to the existing road edge and, if feasible, brush not be cleared from the right-of-way, between the tower facility and the two-track intersection at UTM N4471634 E722793 (see attached map), 2) approximately 750' of powerline right-of-way below the 2-track intersection, as identified in the attached map, be shifted northeast into burned acreage to avoid further involvement of remnant sagebrush/bitterbrush shrub land and to make some effort at reducing the appearance of a roadbed . This shift, depending on the need for surface preparation, would involve distances of 10-75 feet, and 3) that no blading occur and no wheeled vehicles be allowed to travel cross-country between the two-track access road and existing powerline corridor (i.e., one pass with dozer only).

***Signature of specialist:*** Ed Hollowed 10/25/03

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS:** This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of these activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

***Signature of specialist:*** Penny Brown 10/10/03

**11. PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:** BLM Resource Specialists

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/DECISION RECORD

**FONSI:** The environmental assessment, analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action, has been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

**DECISION AND RATIONALE:** It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES:**

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

3. All contractors and land-use operators moving surface disturbing equipment into the weed free zones must clean their equipment prior to use on BLM lands. These requirements may be waived by the area manager.

4. Application of herbicides must be under field supervision of an EPA-certified pesticide applicator. Herbicides must be registered by the EPA and application proposals must be approved by the BLM.

5. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer. The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

6. Any livestock control facilities (e.g. fences) and/or rangeland improvements impacted during this operation will be replaced or repaired to their prior condition.

7. In order to stabilize road densities and road-related impacts on big game severe winter ranges (a White River ROD/RMP approved land use decision) and to minimize further reduction or deterioration of remnant shrub land resources, it is recommended that: 1) the power line be laid immediately adjacent to the existing road edge and, if feasible, brush not be cleared from the right-of-way, between the tower facility and the two-track intersection at UTM N4471634 E722793 (see attached map), 2) approximately 750' of power line right-of-way below the 2-track intersection, as identified in the attached map, be shifted northeast into burned acreage to avoid further involvement of remnant sagebrush/bitterbrush shrub land and to make some effort at reducing the appearance of a roadbed. This shift, depending on the need for surface preparation, would involve distances of 10-75 feet, and 3) that no blading occur and no wheeled vehicles be allowed to travel cross-country between the two-track access road and existing power line corridor (i.e., one pass with dozer only).

**REMARKS:** This action will be authorized under the authority of Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

**COMPLIANCE PLAN:** Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

**SIGNATURE OF PREPARER:** Penny Brown

**DATE SIGNED:** 05/11/04

**SIGNATURE OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:** Caroline P. Holbrook

**DATE SIGNED:** 5/11/04

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:** Kurt E. Walter

**DATE SIGNED:** 5/12/04

**ATTACHMENTS:** Map of the Location of the Proposed Action

## Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2004-001-EA

